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Front Cover: Gareth Evans



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CBW's Editor was surprised to find members of the public appeared to notice the detail differences between the SRM and its sibling, the New Routemaster during the SRM's launch at Covent Garden last Wednesday (March 16) – which for those with a trained eye, can be seen at the rear of the bus. **GARETH EVANS**

Back end of a bus?

It's easy for those of us involved or interested in the industry to believe members of the public don't really know one bus type from another – single or double-deckers aside – particularly in London, where all the buses used on local services are, of course, painted red.

Much to my surprise last week however, I found that more than a handful of people did in fact, recognise the detail differences some of us take in our stride. As you'll read on p16, Wrightbus and Volvo launched the SRM, a variant of the New Routemaster mounted on Volvo's B5LH chassis. Taking my (in)famous 'jaunty' angled photos on Tavistock Street at the rear of the London Transport Museum, I was approached by what seasoned bus and rail enthusiasts call 'normals,' who commented on the "different rear styling" of the "new bus." They also asked what was different inside, so I explained the SRM had a single staircase and an airier upper deck. Whatever your opinion of the New Routemaster, it's undoubtedly eye-catching – and I believe Leon Daniels is right to say it's a bus which people stop to look at.

While some will dislike the lack of a window at the rear of the bottom deck

of the SRM, I found the upper deck had a welcoming environment, helped I'm sure by the largely glazed rear windows.

On a separate note, I was most interested to learn of the entry of German-owned FlixBus to the UK scheduled coach market. A child of both recent internet-based technological advances and coach deregulation in its home country, as I understand it, FlixBus works in a manner that it not too dissimilar to our very own National Express – 'partner operators' being those that run coaches under contract. FlixBus has survived the formative stages of the German intercity coach market in the face of intense competition, a situation that has created several casualties. It has a heavy IT presence too – including an app compatible with all major operating systems and online booking up to 15 minutes prior to departure. All that and the arrival of FlixBus in the UK reminded me of Sir Brian Souter's talk at last year's ALBUM conference, in which he described how the so-called 'IT geeks' will lead our industry – and that's far more than Uber.



Gareth Evans Editor



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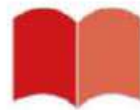
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Son of the **Routemaster** *is born*

Wrightbus and Volvo have launched their new SRM, a development of the New Routemaster, the first six of which are due to enter service on London Sovereign's route 13 in September. **Gareth Evans** reports

Father and son: the New Routemaster (left) alongside the SRM (right). There are only 24 major components which are different. **WRIGHTBUS**



AT A GLANCE

CHASSIS/BODY: Volvo B5LH / Wrightbus SRM
ENGINE: Volvo, Euro 6

TRANSMISSION: 12-speed Volvo I-Shift automatic
PASSENGER CAPACITY: 87 45 upper deck, 21 bottom deck, 21 standees, one priority bay
HEIGHT: 4.42m
LENGTH: 10.6m

WIDTH: 2.52m
WEIGHT: To be confirmed
SPEC: TfL – incl. two-doors, one staircase
SUPPLIED BY: Wrightbus
www.wrightsgroup.com – 028 2564 1212

A bus type that has its unmistakable origins in London's iconic New Routemaster could soon grace the streets of provincial towns and cities – after Volvo and Wrightbus launched the result of their latest collaboration last week.

The SRM, which Wrightbus described as “not being short for anything,” is the product name for the new double-decker bus, which is based on Volvo's B5LH Euro 6 hybrid chassis.

The new bus – which is not to be confused

with the shorter (10.1m) 87-seater variant of the New Routemaster previously reported in *CBW* – was quietly unveiled in Covent Garden on Wednesday (March 16). Building work near the entrance to the London Transport Museum meant the bus was parked round the back on Tavistock Street.

Development

The new body retains the distinctive look of the New Routemaster, more than 720 of which are already in service in London, but has an overall

length of 10.6m – 0.7m shorter than its parent, and features two doors and a single staircase, rather than three doors and twin staircases.

Ian Downie, Managing Director – Sales and Customcare for Wrightbus explained the background to the development of the new bus: “Over 12 months ago, Transport for London (TfL) presented us with a challenge to develop the iconic look of the New Routemaster with a shorter overall length, single staircase and twin doors, which could be built on an alternative driveline combination.

“We took the challenge on board and used our design experience and expertise to develop the SRM. We've worked in conjunction with TfL, Volvo and London United.

“The look of the side structure, roof and floor are the same as the original New Routemaster, along with a number of other important design features, to preserve the style of its already iconic predecessor.

“Aside from the chassis, the main difference between the Routemaster and



VEHICLE LAUNCH > VOLVO WRIGHTBUS SRM



The contrasting rear ends of the New Routemaster (left) and SRM (right). **WRIGHTBUS**

the SRM is the moulded fibreglass dome.

"This is an additional structure to the rest of the vehicle, whereas on the New Routemaster it is part of the structural integrity of the bodywork."

The single-staircase, two-door SRM has a total passenger capacity of 87, with 45 seated on the top deck, 21 on the bottom deck, plus 21 standees. This compares to the 11.3m New Routemaster, which has a total capacity of 62 seats with two staircases.

"From a body perspective, we also sought to achieve a high level of commonality of spare parts, as we wanted to optimise our aftermarket support. There just 24 major new parts required to fit this body onto the Volvo chassis."

"We've also taken a second life into consideration, so we've designed a kit of parts to enable the bus to be changed to a single-door



The side-on view shows the attractive exterior look of the SRM, and also the rear overhang, something that is a consideration for drivers. **GARETH EVANS**



Pictured at the launch outside the back of the London Transport Museum in Covent Garden are: Ian Downie, MD – Sales & Customcare for Wrightbus, Mark Nodder, Chairman and CEO of the Wrights Group, Leon Daniels, TfL's MD for Surface Transport, Richard Hall, MD for RATP Dev London, Phil Owen, Commercial Sales Director at Volvo Bus UK and Sam Mullins, MD at the London Transport Museum. **GARETH EVANS**

vehicle, self-facilitating when it goes for its second life outside London as it is cascaded."

Ian said the offside rear corner on the top deck is solid in order to accommodate the electrical wiring as there is nowhere else to route it up. That corner doesn't feel claustrophobic, however.

Turning to the rear of the bottom deck, Ian explained: "The reason the rear is designed differently from the New Routemaster is the need to accommodate Volvo's successful rear-engined hybrid chassis."

On that note, Phil Owen, Commercial Sales Director for Volvo Bus UK & Ireland, said: "We are pleased to be here today supporting Wrightbus at the launch of their new SRM body and we are happy that our partnership continues to be developed in this way. This new Volvo Bus/Wrightbus combination gives operators a wider choice of body options from Wrightbus with the class-leading BSLH Euro 6 Hybrid chassis."

The next step

Ian Downie added: "We have completed three vehicles in total and are delighted and



VEHICLE LAUNCH > VOLVO WRIGHTBUS SRM



Volvo's Euro 6 hybrid driveline is located beneath the bonnet at the rear. **GARETH EVANS**

honoured that London RATP Dev London have placed the order for this first vehicle."

This first order for RATP Dev London is for a total of 56 double-decker buses, with six being the new SRM and the remaining 50 being with the Gemini 3 bodystyle.

"This first vehicle will be leaving here and going for a small amount of further test work, before it's unveiled properly on the streets of London. It will be weighed in a week's time. We're confident already that we'll have a minimum of 87 passengers, which will include 21 standees. The exact weight will be confirmed once our tests are complete.

"There will be some small changes from the Gemini 3 – may be one or two passengers down, but we'll have that confirmed. This vehicle is not materially different."

Price range

While he would not be drawn on the price range, Mark Nodder, Chairman and CEO of the Wrights Group, remarked: "This vehicle needs to be, and will be competitive. We're in an open tender situation, in an international

marketplace, and we're determined to win a substantial share of the market. We can start building them ASAP. We are delighted to gain the endorsement of one of our closest customers in London to launch. We're ready to rock and roll."

Provincial prospects

Asked if there had been any expressions of interest outside London for the SRM, Ian commented: "We've had some interest outside London. People are very keen to have a look at a 10.6m, two or one-door variant. That's how we've designed this vehicle – not just for London, but also for the rest of the UK, and potentially outside the UK.

"We could offer a larger 11.3m variant for the



Space is not in short supply inside the driving cab. **GARETH EVANS**

provinces too. That's one of the aspects we've looked at – having that commonality. It's great working in partnership with Volvo. We've got a successful vehicle, with good fuel consumption, good performance and excellent reliability."

Asked if the body could be mounted on another chassis, such as Wrightbus' own, Ian replied: "There is potential – this body could be fitted onto the straight diesel-powered StreetDeck. Again, we've ensured we've looked at the London scene first because of the volume, but also due to the hybrid technology that is mandatory.

"We're talking to operators about different seats and seating layouts they require, so the seating capacity of an 11.3m variant remains to be confirmed."

As for opening windows, something that is a 'must have' for many operators, particularly those outside London, Ian said: "We've been working with TfL on a design with opening windows that gives the same DNA – that's about to be finalised."

Operator view

"It is really exciting to be taking delivery of the first new SRM bus," enthused Richard Hall, Managing Director for RATP Dev London.

"The Volvo B5LH product has performed very well for us over the past year. The continued partnership between Wrightbus and Volvo has delivered yet



A rear nearside view, showing how the design differs to the New Routemaster. Note how the bottom deck has a solid rear end, which the upper deck back is largely glazed, in contrast to the New Routemaster. **GARETH EVANS**

VEHICLE LAUNCH > VOLVO WRIGHTBUS SRM



The lack of thick pillars at the front upper deck corner allows in plenty of natural light, and also gives a clearer view of the world outside. **GARETH EVANS**



On the face of it, the non-glazed section of the rear upper deck window may seem a curious move, but Wrightbus said it's necessary to accommodate wiring. It is however, far from gloomy and claustrophobic. **GARETH EVANS**



The glazed staircase helps to create an airy feel upstairs. **GARETH EVANS**



A closer look at the rear of the bottom saloon. Three passengers can be accommodated on the back row. **GARETH EVANS**



Ian Downie, who stands five foot 10 inches tall, demonstrates the headroom on the back seats of the upper deck. **GARETH EVANS**

another great product and Wrightbus has worked hard to deliver against the challenges laid out to them by TfL."

Allocated to Edgware Garage, the first SRMs are due to enter service on London Sovereign's route 13 in September, replacing Wrightbus Elcipse Gemini 2-bodied Volvo B5LHs. The frequent service links Golders Green station with Aldwych, via Swiss Cottage station, Baker Street station and Regent Street.

Asked why route 13 had been selected, Richard replied: "It's a high-profile service,

which importantly, runs into the centre of town. It also helps us meet the emissions target, being a Euro 6 vehicle. The current vehicles on the 13 are Euro 5 hybrids, which will be cascaded."

TfL's requirements

Echoing Ian Downie's words, Leon Daniels, Managing Director for Surface Transport for TfL, said: "The Mayor did indeed challenge the manufacturers to come with a design which incorporated what he called the 'DNA' of the Routemaster; and move forward all the successful work achieve on fuel efficiency, air quality and passenger environment.

"Congratulations to Volvo and Wrightbus for marrying the B5LH and the gorgeous design of the New Routemaster. The existing New Routemaster is consistently ahead in customer surveys. Therefore we'd expect the SRM to perform in the same way – something the passengers and staff love, and makes people stop in the street and stare. No matter who wins the mayoral election or where we go in Europe, we are certain the next generation of buses in London will have these fabulous features.

"We are approaching two heavy years in terms of new vehicle requirements in London – we need at least 700 new double-deckers in each of the financial years. This is a really good time arrive in the market with this new product.

I wish Volvo and Wrightbus every success in selling these vehicles, not only in London, but around the rest of the country as well – and maybe even overseas."

Leon stressed it was "not compulsory" to buy one of these so-called DNA buses: "As part of open public sector procurement, we give the market the freedom to specify a value-for-money product in the hope of winning the tender. It's for the operators to decide what products to offer – and it will be for us (TfL), taking into account procurement rules, the available sums of money and the price offerings from the operators – and it will be down to us to accept the best value-for-money."

"TfL will not be buying any SRMs," Leon continued. "TfL is not generally in the business of owning the bus fleet. I'm a great believer in the private sector doing what it does best – including managing garage assets, labour and the fleet. We bought the fleet for the New Routemaster as we were of the view that a three-door, two-staircase vehicle would have limited prospects on the second-hand market, and therefore the operators would be building into their prices the high risk factor for potential losses upon disposal. We decided we would grant the operators an amnesty on that risk by owning the fleet. In general, we like the fleet to be owned by the operators." ■